

## Rise 53

### Chapter 53: An unexpected surprise

In the end, Zhu Ping'an didn't tell his Fourth Aunt, because before he could leave the ancestral hall, his grandmother came over. Earlier, she had forgotten to put the flatbread in the food box and was worried that the eldest uncle wouldn't have enough to eat, so she specially brought two flatbreads.

Soon, the ancestral hall echoed with the grandmother's roaring. However, she was ultimately biased, and it was more bark than bite. The eldest uncle didn't face any real punishment. Zhu Ping'an had grown accustomed to it by now.

The night passed without wind or rain, and right after breakfast the next morning, the grandmother urged Zhu Ping'an's father to go to town to sell the wild boar, as the family finances were too tight. The gluttonous wild boar had been tied up in the courtyard all night, and early in the morning, the grandmother fed it a big bowl of food. The pig, oblivious to what it would soon face, ate happily and heartily.

Because the wild boar was so large and heavy, the grandmother sent the Fourth Uncle to go along to the town as well. Coincidentally, it was market day in town, so Chen and the other sisters-in-law decided they might as well go together. So, a cart carried the wild boar, a big basket of wildflowers that had been mocked by the family countless times, and little Zhu Ping'an, Zhu Pingjun, and Zhu Pingchuan. The cart rumbled on its way. Walking behind it were Fourth Uncle, Chen and the sisters-in-law, along with Zhu Ping'an's father, who was driving the cart. It was truly a family mobilization.

With so many people, the journey was filled with lively chatter.

"Zhi'er, why are you selling flowers again?" Fourth Aunt, walking alongside, saw Zhu Ping'an sitting in the cart with the big basket of dried wildflowers and couldn't resist mocking him.

Chen rolled her eyes.

"Yes, last time someone even gave me a copper coin," Zhu Ping'an said earnestly, pretending to be serious.

As a result, Fourth Aunt, Fourth Uncle, and the eldest aunt laughed even harder. A copper coin? Did he really think he earned that? They probably felt sorry for him and gave it out of pity.

After Fourth Aunt started, the whole family began teasing Zhu Ping'an, after all, it was a long and boring trip, and a bit of fun was welcome.

Fourth Uncle took the lead, with his lazy and mischievous ways, teasing people in his own unique style.

"Zhi'er, do you know why grandma wants us to sell the pig?" Fourth Uncle asked mischievously.

"To exchange it for money," Zhu Ping'an answered calmly.

Upon hearing this, Fourth Uncle's face lit up with more mischief. He deliberately tried to scare Zhu Ping'an, "Yeah, to exchange it for money. But our family still needs a lot of money. So, just selling the pig won't be enough. We also need to sell people."

As soon as Fourth Uncle finished speaking, Zhu Ping'an immediately noticed that Zhu Pingjun, sitting beside him, shuddered at his words.

Adults and their twisted sense of humor! Zhu Ping'an felt rather disdainful.

Of course, Zhu Ping'an played along, pretending to be scared. His chubby face trembled a little as he asked, "Who will we sell?"

Zhu Pingjun also turned to look at Fourth Uncle, showing concern.

Seeing Zhu Ping'an's frightened expression made Fourth Uncle very pleased, and without hesitation, he said, "Of course, we'll sell you."

Fourth Uncle thought his words would scare Zhu Ping'an, this little rascal, into crying, but unexpectedly, Zhu Ping'an grinned and said, "Hehe, I knew Fourth Uncle wasn't worth much."

Fourth Uncle, who had been waiting for a laugh at Zhu Ping'an's expense, was dumbfounded. It wasn't about who was worth more!

Chen was the first to laugh, followed by Third Aunt, the eldest aunt, and Fourth Aunt. Even Fourth Uncle got teased and kicked by Fourth Aunt.

When they arrived in town, the group split up. The eldest aunt and Chen, along with the other sisters-in-law, went to their usual seamstress shop to sell the pouches they had sewn and to buy some colored threads and other sewing supplies. Fourth Uncle and Zhu Ping'an's father went to sell the wild boar. Zhu Pingchuan led Zhu Ping'an to sell the wildflowers, though everyone except Zhu Ping'an's father and Chen continued to mock them.

They went to the same herbal medicine shop, Jimin Hall, as last time. As soon as they walked in, one of the two apprentices, with a smile on his face, came over.

"You're here just in time. Our supply of honeysuckle is almost out," said the apprentice who had almost turned Zhu Ping'an and his brother away last time. This time, he was very enthusiastic.

Zhu Pingchuan, carrying the big basket, didn't know what to say.

Zhu Ping'an, with his chubby, adorable face, smiled and said, "Hehe, little brother, you'll have to give us a better price."

The old doctor, who was stroking his beard and reading a herbal medicine book, couldn't help but laugh when he heard this. "As long as the honeysuckle is of good quality, giving you a few extra coins is no problem."

Zhu Ping'an's smile grew even brighter upon hearing this. "Thank you, wise doctor."

The honeysuckle they picked this time was still considered top-grade, just like last time, sold at 50 copper coins per pound. The difference was that this time, they had a much larger basket, not just Zhu Ping'an's small one. In total, they had 5 pounds, 6 taels, and 3 qian of honeysuckle, which came to 267 copper coins. Because of the old doctor's words, the apprentice took it upon himself to round it up to 270 coins.

As they were about to leave, the old doctor kindly reminded them that the flowering season for honeysuckle was coming to an end and suggested they hurry back to pick more.

After leaving the herbal shop, Zhu Ping'an and his older brother placed the copper coins in their basket, then covered it with a piece of rag as a disguise.

Zhu Ping'an and his brother had gained quite a bit, and over on Chen's side, there was also an unexpected surprise.

Chen and her sisters-in-law went to their usual sewing shop to sell the pouches they had been working on for more than half a month. These pouches weren't simply pieces of fabric sewn together but required many steps, including seams and intricate embroidery of temple patterns. Each pouch took about two days to

complete. However, since their designs weren't very innovative and the fabric they used was relatively cheap cotton, the pouches they worked so hard on weren't worth much—about 10 copper coins each.

"You ladies really are a team, with such fine craftsmanship. The price is still the same as before, 10 coins per pouch. Does that work for you?" The shop's mistress, always skilled at dealing with people, greeted them with her usual enthusiasm, making them feel appreciated.

The price was the same as before, so Chen and the others had no objections. The eldest aunt and the third aunt had made eight pouches, earning 80 coins. Chen had only made seven, earning 70 coins. Fourth Aunt, who made nine pouches and earned 90 coins, was delighted and beamed with happiness, having earned the most.

"Please take a look at these three pouches as well. See if you'd be willing to accept them," Chen said as they were about to leave. She had stopped, thought for a moment, and pulled three different pouches from her bag, calling out to the shopkeeper.

These three pouches were made from scraps of fine fabric that Zhu Ping'an had brought back last time. The scraps were high-quality materials, including silk, satin, and gauze. Chen had patched the scraps together to make the pouches.

The shopkeeper took them, felt the fabric, and smiled. "This is quite novel, and the material is good. How about this? I'll buy them at 15 coins—no, 20 coins each. Does that sound good?"

Chen's heart raced. Twenty coins, twenty coins each! The happiness came so suddenly.

